

Hillandale News

No 205 August 1995



MECHANICAL MUSIC

Tuesday 12th September 1995



A G&T. Oak Gramophone pedestal sold recently at auction for £2500.

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Hillandale News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

Founded in 1919

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Front cover illustration: The late Len Watts. See tributes on page 352.

(Photograph by courtesy of Rick Hardy)

EDITOR'S DESK



Len Watts

I am sure that I am not the only person who has felt a great loss with the passing of Len Watts. Len was one of those unsung heroes who enhanced the reputation and standing of our Society. Not only was he one of the few experts on the affairs of Pathé, he was also a skilled engineer whose reputation was so highly regarded that one of the world's major record companies entrusted him with the repair of one of the treasured exhibits from their museum. The Society has lost a loyal and trusted friend who will be sadly missed. Tributes to Len are paid by several of his friends on pages 352 to 354 of this issue.

Acoustic recording artists still alive

A short while ago (*Hillandale News*, Nos. 192-194) there was some correspondence about artists still alive who made acoustic recordings. Peter Adamson has sent me the following details of another artist in this category. I quote from his note: "Readers may be interested to know that Leo Ornstein, who made American Columbia disc recordings of Chopin, Grieg and Poldini pieces in 1913, is still alive at the age of 102. Better known as pianist than as composer, he nevertheless shocked the musical world of the time with extremely discordant "futurist" works of his own such as *Wild Men's Dance* and *Suicide in an Airplane*. He later founded the Ornstein School of Music and retired in 1955."

August Meeting

Timothy Massey will be giving a programme commemorating the life of John McCormack, who died fifty years ago. This is a must for lovers of the work of this celebrated artist. All are welcome.

September Meeting

We are fortunate indeed to have Nigel Douglas, the well-known singer, broadcaster and writer, to talk to us this month! He will be talking about and giving musical illustrations from his books and CDs entitled *Legendary Voices* and *More Legendary Voices*. I attended a similar talk he gave in Kinross in June and can thoroughly recommend this event to all readers. Do come along and enjoy an excellent evening's entertainment.

Please note that material intended for inclusion in *Hillandale News* must reach the Editor not later than **six weeks before the first day of the month of issue**.

Hence the deadline for the **October** issue will be **15th August 1995**.

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Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor.

DATING PATHÉ RECORDS

by Len Watts

Foreword by George Woolford

This contribution is based on a letter I received from the late Len Watts in July 1993. It is typical of its kind and full of information. It is reproduced here in memory of Len. I hope that this information is useful to the many collectors of Pathé discs and any further information would be appreciated.

Guide to dating Pathés

Pathé discs were all pantographed from master cylinders and it would appear that every time this was done a new number was assigned. Maybe more than one copy was made, which possibly allows for consecutive numbers to be distributed to other pressing plants. With this number are capital letters like RA or SR which may be the initials of the recording expert in charge. Possibly the early use of B or C are merely references to an engineer.

The stamper numbers and the lettering, within the almost circular band at the record centre, are applied separately. You can get two identical stamper numbered discs but with changed lettering. (Pathé often made errors in translations. For example Madame Albani became Madame Albany; a truly Freudian slip!)

We must assume that records were remastered when the stampers wore out or became damaged (as often one side only is changed). Also the dubbing process was improved upon over the years. Pathé even recorded master cylinders electrically, when electrical recording came in, and transferred them to stampers by their traditional pantograph method.

Quite how low the stamper numbers go is at present unknown. So far the starting point is at 3501. Early recordings have announcements, which are omitted in subsequent remastering. As a date indication the following table acts as a guide with the highest number for any particular year:

- 1906 up to 10,000
- 1907 up to 20,000
- 1908 up to 30,000
- 1909 up to 40,000

- 1910 up to 50,000
- 1911 up to 60,000
- 1912 up to 70,000
- 1913 up to 80,000
- 1914 up to 93,000

A new series was started in 1914 as (14) - 1 and continues:

- 1915 up to (15) - 1
- 1916 up to (16) - 1

This system is most obviously visible on the various sizes of centre-start etched label records. The system was already in place for the so-called 'concrete' Pathé discs of c.1905, which have the same centres showing through a gold paper disc on the playing side. These discs are 24cm in diameter and have a coloured decorative back. The later (1906) records are 27cm in diameter, single-sided and made of shellac.

The pantograph system continued when paper label edge-start records were introduced (1915) and was employed by the many subsidiary companies owned by Pathé, like *Ideal Opera* and *Diamond Disc*. These companies used pseudonyms for their artists.

Early pressings also carry the 5-spot design which is the Pathé trademark carried over from the ends of their cylinders. Some early discs also carry the letters A.I.C.C., which stands for the Anglo-Italian Commerce Company. This affiliation probably started in 1902 and came to an end in 1903. One of Pathé's greatest rivals at that time were the International Zonophone Company, who were also associated with the Anglo-Italian Commerce Company. Both companies lost their connection with A.I.C.C. after the International Zonophone Company was purchased by The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd. The discs of those artists who had recorded for the Anglo-Italian Commerce Company bore the A.I.C.C. lettering, thus indicating the origin of those recordings.

THE VITAPHONE PROJECT: REDISCOVERING EARLY SOUND SHORTS

by David Goldenberg

"Vitaphone...it's like life itself". This was an early plaudit by Warner Brothers Pictures in promoting their synchronised sound-on-disc talking picture process in the mid twenties. Today, for a growing number of film and record collectors, historians, jazz and vaudeville fans, the Vitaphone Project is also like life itself.

Between 1925 and 1939, Warner Brothers Vitaphone studios on Avenue M in Brooklyn, ground out over 1,500 one-, two- and even three-reel shorts. At its peak, Vitaphone's output of "canned" vaudeville, music and comedy was one per day. The greatest names of the vaudeville stage would travel to Brooklyn to film one of their older acts before three continuously turning cameras. It was easy money for these performers and did not interfere with their regular schedules on Broadway. MGM also had studios on 127th Street and First Avenue doing the same kind of filming. Other studios in Manhattan included Pathé and DeForrest Phonofilm. Columbia made shorts in conjunction with the Victor Talking Machine Company in Camden, while Universal worked out of Fort Lee, New Jersey. Another producer of early sound shorts was Paramount, located conveniently in Astoria, Long Island. Of course, the Hollywood studios were also renovated for sound, but the bulk of the early shorts were filmed in the New York area.

The Vitaphone Brooklyn studios still stand, but now as a Hebrew School for Girls. The facility's previous use is still evident as seen by the Vitaphone Project during a visit in 1992. The catwalks above the two sound

stages are still there as are the offices and rehearsal halls (now classrooms). Behind weedlike trees stands a brick smokestack with an inlaid logo VITAGRAPH. This was the original silent film studio before the takeover by Vitaphone.

In 1988, Turner Network Television began showing movies from their vast library of MGM, Warner Bros. and RKO films. In between these features were all types of shorts, most of which had not been seen since their original release. Many of them had dance and jazz bands, comedy stars and singers who were well-known recording artists. However, most of the very early shorts were not seen and this puzzled collectors. There was much confusion during that period about the future of talkies. Exhibitors had to choose between changing to either sound-on-disc or sound-on-film processes, both of which were expensive. Eventually, the sound-on-film system became the standard. However, many early films with sound discs had been separated, especially Vitaphone, leaving only the mute print in the studio vaults.

The separation of sound and film elements is a particularly cruel fate to these earliest sound films. The fragile 16" discs were shipped to theatres in large wooden crates along with the films. Playing from the inside out, the discs were marked in the wax with an arrow showing the projectionist exactly where to place the stylus. A single marked frame was centred in the projector's gate. If the projectionist was lucky, everything stayed in synchronisation. It was a cumbersome system at best. Discs, as well as

films, were required to be returned to the exchange after their run. However, discs were broken, misplaced or not returned for various reasons. Many of them were melted down during World War II shellac drives. Yet many did survive and are turning up as old time collectors liquidate their collections or pass away. Some have one disc while others have hundreds.

Some of us were aware of 16" sound discs that were in collectors' hands, and in the Spring of 1991, a group of record collectors (Sherwin Dunner, Ron Hutchinson, John Newton and myself) met to discuss the possibility of locating some of the missing discs, and working with the copyright owners, encouraging the restoration of these early sound films. Ron Hutchinson, who organised the meeting, had received a letter from Turner Entertainment Company approving the search. Since the Vitaphone studios produced the largest number of shorts, it was decided to call this effort the Vitaphone Project.

Our first meeting developed our objectives:

1. Locating and cataloguing Vitaphone and other early soundtrack discs and mute film elements internationally. Our prime focus are short films from the beginning of the commercially successful period (1926). However, we will note **all** sound discs including those from feature films and pre-Vitaphone companies. All data will be shared with collectors, film archives and the Turner Entertainment Co.
2. Encourage the release of more interesting titles on home video.
3. Interview people who worked on these films and to develop a comprehensive history of the studio, its output and heritage for a possible book or broadcast.
4. Publish a newsletter to chronicle newly found discs and information.

The success of our group has far exceeded our expectations. More than 1,500 sound-



Left to right: Ron Hutchinson, Sherwin Dunner, John Newton and David Goldenberg at Shillamith School - Former Vitaphone Studios, Brooklyn, New York (1992)

track records have been uncovered in private collections in reply to our newsletter *Vitaphone News*. These include discs for Vitaphone, MGM Movietone Acts, Pathé and Universal Studios. Many of them match mute prints held at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) and the Library of Congress film archives. As a result, several important short films have been remastered and others are scheduled for restoration. UCLA has restored Vitaphone shorts by Ben Bernie's Orchestra, Trixie Friganza and Baby Rose Marie (detailed later) as a direct result of the Vitaphone Project. Other archives such as the Library of Congress and the British Film Institute have co-operated to restore several gems with more on the way. Here are some other Vitaphone shorts that have already been processed:

Opry House (V-834) with the Mound City Blue Blowers

Jack Buchanan and Glee Club (V-3816)

Gus Arnheim and His Orchestra (V-2126, 2584 and 2585)

Blossom Seely/Benny Fields (V-548)

Norman Thomas Quintette (V-827) - a black vaudeville team with an acrobatic drummer.

Tal Henry and His North Carolina Orchestra (V-732)

Leo Reisman and His Hotel Brunswick Orchestra (V-770)

Consider some of the talents who worked at Vitaphone during these years: Bob Hope, Fatty Arbuckle, Red Skelton, Baby Rose



Label of Baby Rose Marie Disc - Vitaphone #809 (1929)

Marie, Burns and Allen, Bergen and McCarthy; opera stars Beniamino Gigli, Frances Alda and Giovanni Martinelli; recording artists Irving and Jack Kaufman, Frank Crumit, Irene Franklin and Jane Green. There were also British entertainers such as Cissie Loftus and Jack Buchanan and George Carpentier, the famous French boxer. However, it's the unknown names of long forgotten comedians, vaudevillians and jazz artists that have been truly surprising. The hilarious comedy team of Willie and Eugene Howard, for instance, are as funny today as they were in 1926 as is Josephine Harmon, who did not make commercial recordings but was a top name in vaudeville. Jazz performances by the great Cab Calloway, Waring's Pennsylvanians, Ben Pollack and Red Nichols are rivaled by those of Tal Henry from North Carolina and black legend Reb Spike from Los Angeles.

There's a personal reward when a "lost" Vitaphone short is not only found, but can be restored so that its stars can see it again. Such was the case with the 1929 one reel *Baby Rose Marie*, *The Child Wonder* (Vitaphone 809). The four-year old was indeed a wonder, as demonstrated by hearing the sound disc. With perfect phrasing, she sang three popular songs of the day. Years later, the short's star would be known to us as simply Rose Marie: singer, film star and television star of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *Hollywood Squares* and *Murphy Brown*. A search turned up a silent but well-preserved print of the short. A call to Rose Marie revealed that she had been seeking this film all her life, but had been told that it no longer existed. The film was restored and in April 1994, UCLA re-premiered the film with Rose Marie in the audience. After the screening, she thanked



(Fred) Waring's Pennsylvanians - Vitaphone #292 (1926)

everyone involved and graciously took a belated bow for her performance as a four-year old.

The search for missing discs has turned up many diverse items such as tracks for early talkie trailers, cartoons, Hal Roach silent comedies, Thomas Watson (Alexander Graham Bell's assistant), some 1930 (yes, 1930!) Vitaphone Kiddie discs with Judy Garland in technicolor, the full track to John Barrymore's talkie debut *The Man from Blankleys* and a wonderful Georgie Price short making a Vitaphone in Brooklyn. The Library of Congress found the mute film without sound for the 1926 Jolson short *Al Jolson in a Plantation Act*. It languished for years in a mislabelled can as *Jazz Singer Trailer*. In the past year, the Vitaphone Project located a cracked copy of the sound disc to this short after a long search. The disc has been repaired to permit copying onto DAT tape for rematching. If all goes well, it will be shown in 1995 at UCLA's annual preservation festival.

The project has been able to interview people who worked at the Vitaphone studio thereby bringing additional information to the collecting communities. Silent film director Joseph Henabery worked at the Brooklyn facility beginning in 1931, directing a

myriad of wonderful shorts. Ron Hutchinson had contacted his son, Robert, who with Ron's encouragement, eventually donated his father's memorabilia to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as a special collection.

The revelations never seem to end. Much material is turning up outside of the United States: Foreign language shorts which were regularly filmed in Brooklyn, non-Vitaphone obscurities such as the ultra-scarce Kellam Sound Process films of 1921, unknown DeForrest Phonofilms and black-produced shorts of the 1929-1932 period.

The impact on **all** vintage record collectors by these recent discoveries is enormous. Now not only do we have a chance to hear previously unheard performances, but we can see them as well. Some have already been released on laser disc sets (*MGM/UA The Dawn of Sound Volumes 1, 2 and 3* and *Swing Swing Swing*). The Vitaphone Project is always looking for contacts and leads, particularly those in collectors' hands. Readers with any information about shorts, especially Vitaphone, are asked to write to us at the Vitaphone Project, c/o Ron Hutchinson, [REDACTED] Piscataway, NJ 08854, U.S.A. Tel: [REDACTED]

C.L.P.G.S. BOOKLIST

Cat No. BD 32 *The Edison Cylinder Phonograph Companion* by George Frow
£30 plus postage

Cat No. BD 01 *Hayes on Record - The Story of the Manufacture of Records* at EMI, over 200 pages of nostalgia. A great value paperback by Peter Hall and Colin Brown
£8 plus postage

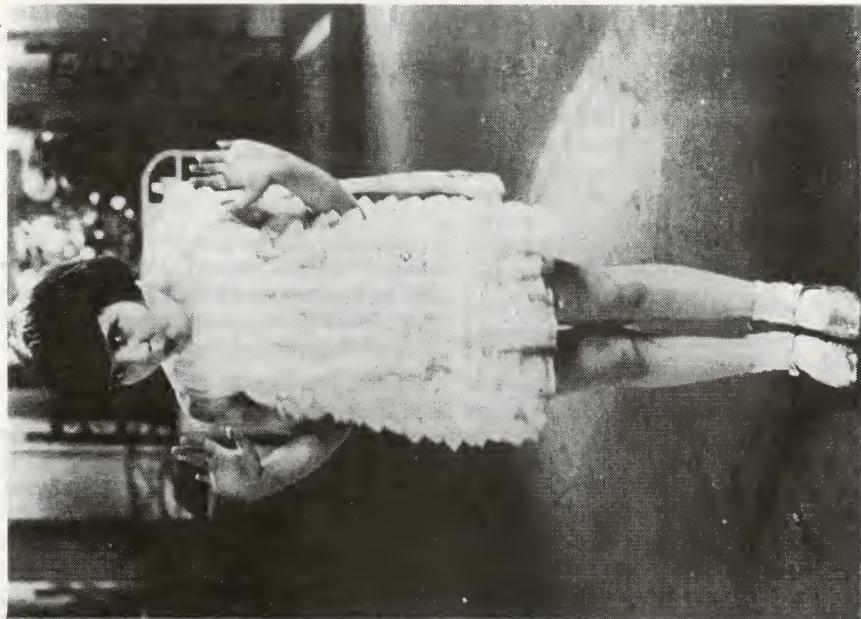
The California Ramblers - Edison Laterals 2. This CD, which was given an excellent review by Paul Collenette in the October 1994 issue of *Hillandale News*, is now in stock.
£13 plus postage

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Baby Rose Vitaphone #809
(1929)



Willie and Eugene Howard
Vitaphone #572 (1927)

THE BRITISH RECORD INDUSTRY DURING THE REIGN OF KING EDWARD VII: 1901 - 1910

by Frank Andrews

Part 7

1909 - and the Cylinder Trade

Russell Hunting, already engaged by Pathé since August 1908, in November negotiated the sale of the lease of the Cambridge Heath factory, the master moulds, material stocks, the goodwill and other assets of the Russell Hunting Record Co. Ltd from its receiver. He then proceeded to trade under the name of **Messrs. Russell Hunting and Co.** In February 1909 Hunting resuscitated the Sterling Cylinder Records, publishing a new catalogue of 300 titles, plus 28 new titles not previously released. This new business could only have lasted four months, for in May, Messrs. J. E. Hough Ltd. bought the stock, moulds and plant from Russell Hunting and transferred it to Camberwell to replace the plant there which had been destroyed in the fire. The fire helped to bring Edison Bell down. Already in financial straits, its General Manager James E. Hough acquired the meagre assets of Edison Bell and the business of Edisonia Ltd. (which he founded in the first place). From such assets of the two companies he established **James E. Hough Ltd.** in April 1909 as he did not have any cylinder making capacity to continue the manufacturing Edison Bell cylinders. From Sterling moulds Young proceeded to produce a few *Edison Bell Sterling Cylinder Records*. Finished records had already been supplied by Russell Hunting and Co. before the May purchase of its plants and moulds.

The first issues from J. E. Hough Ltd. came in July 1909, although Edison Bell itself had published its last list in January. For the

new 1909-1910 season, Hough's Edison Bell works produced a *New Process Edison Bell Cylinder*, the standard 9d. Popular cylinder continuing.

Columbia Phonograph Co. Gen'l. in London had abandoned all wax cylinders in 1909. However a *Columbia Indestructible Record* of 2 minutes playing time was advertised as being on sale from August 15th by John G. Murdoch and Co. Ltd. who had been appointed sole controllers of the records by the Columbia Phonograph Co. Gen'l. of New York. The British branch had nothing at all to do with their sales nor their eventual British recordings.

The records originated from the Indestructible Record Company of Albany, New York State. This firm had a laboratory in Brooklyn, New York City, the business having been founded in July 1906 on the extant Lambert patents plus another of Messer. They had moved into the Albany and Brooklyn premises in 1907. In November 1908 it was reported that the Columbia Phonograph Co. Gen'l. had purchased the whole of the Indestructible Record Company's stocks and its established business on September 25th and would henceforth market that company's records as Columbia Indestructible Records.

They were put on sale in England at the price of 1s. 6d. and all were American recorded. The correct name of the American company was **The Indestructible Photographic Record Company**. This appeared on the boxes after Columbia gave

up on the records, at which time the British recordings and a 200 t.p.i. 4-minute indestructible cylinder was also available.

Throughout 1909 Clarion Records continued, from the Premier Manufacturing Co. Ltd. with its new product, the *Ebonoid 5 Minute Cylinder Record*, with 200 t.p.i. introduced in April.

The National Phonograph Co. Ltd. with its Edison Standard and Edison Amberol records continued throughout the year also, but no *Grand Opera Records* were issued, neither had any been issued in 1908.

Thus stood the cylinder trade at the close of 1909, with yet many Pathé cylinders, in all sizes, still available at rock-bottom prices from a number of dealers with the same situation applied to the defunct Sterling Gold Moulded Cylinders.

1909 - The Large Disc Market

In contrast to the five makes of cylinder available during 1909, the disc trade began

with at least twenty-one makes in the market, viz. Beka Records, Bell Discs (Edison Bell), Columbia, Clarion, Elephone, Favorite, Fonotipia, Globophon/Globos?, Gramophone (which began to be pressed with His Master's Voice trade mark instead of the 'Recording Angel'), Homophone, Imperial, Jumbo, Lyraphon, Melograph, Millophone, Odeon, Pathé, Phona-Disc (Edison Bell), Polyphon, Rena, Twin and Zono-phone.

In October 1909, the Premier manufacturing Co. Ltd., through its receiver, put the vertical cut *Ebonoid Five Minutes* disc records on the market selling at 3s. each.

[Ebonoid 10002 *Soldiers Chorus* from Gounod's *Faust* with the Premier Military Band was played at Neasden.]

The Elephone Record lasted just on the year, the company going out of business in the summer of 1909 with a dealer buying up the liquidator's stock and advertising those remaining discs in November.



The Ebonoid Phono-cut Record

The Imperial Records (from Leeds and Catlin in America) had no fresh issues in 1909. In April that year the **American Graphophone Co.**, the makers of Columbia Records in America, won its suit against Leeds and Catlin for infringement of its Joseph W. Jones patent (which it first brought in October 1903). Imperial Records' old stock, both from the American factory and the British agents, were bought up by a dealer and by Gamages stores in Holborn. Concert Records were also being withdrawn from the U.K. market.

The Millophone Records was another casualty during the year. H. Mills, of the City and Walthamstow, had a contract with J. E. Hough Ltd. to have the Bell Disc masters used to press his *Millophone New Records*, 10½" at 2s. 3d., the same price as his former Millophone Records. This "stencilled" disc was contemporary with the resumed pressing of the Bell Disc by J. E. Hough Ltd. which went on sale in August after a six months interim of no new titles.

At the Leipzig Easter Fair, Pathé Frères demonstrated their large 50cm (20") discs for the first time. The London branch demonstrated them at Grays, Essex in June, the discs being made to revolve at 120 r.p.m. In September the discs were used to accompany King's service Animated Pictures at The Public Hall, Croydon having an audience of 1,500 people and employing a Junior Majestic Pathéphone. The discs were put on sale for the new 1909-1910 season at a price of 12s. 6d. each, with fifty titles ready on 25 discs.

If the Phoebus, the Royal and the Sapphire Phono Discs continued to be sold during 1909, none of the trade papers gave them further mention.

Edison Bell's 8½" Phona-Discs had their last list published in January 1909 because when J. E. Hough Ltd. resumed production of Edison Bell's former products, it declined to resuscitate that small disc's catalogue.

One of the most important events of the year was the closing down of the Rena Manufacturing Co. Ltd. Rena had issued its first list of 12" *Rena Double Face Records* comprising 51 discs with all the titles "picked" from Columbia's Double Face Records in the 12" size introduced in December 1908 with a few additions in August 1909 - the rarely found D 16500 to D 16553 series - and picked from the continued 12" single face Columbias. The business was transferred to the Columbia Phonograph Co. Gen'l. with Louis Sterling appointed as its British General Manager. With the acquisition of the Rena 10" and 12" catalogue, Sterling deleted all the Columbia Double Face Records with their separate "D" prefixed catalogue numbers. He continued the Rena numbering and label style, but with the Columbia company's name around the bottom. However the *Pan and his Pipes* trade mark was replaced with the *Columbia Magic Notes* trade mark. The first Rena Double Face Record lists to come from Columbia were advertised in December, when the true Columbia matrix numbers became the norm. Columbia Single Face records continued into the Spring of 1910, in both sizes.

The Gramophone Co. Ltd., through its British Zonophone Company, began selling a new line in single-side recorded Zonophones for the new 1909-1910 season when, in September, it introduced the 12" *Zonophone Records* at 3s. each, the same price as what were then being pressed as 10" *Zonophone Grand Opera Records*.

New labels to the market during 1909 are difficult to enumerate because of the innovation of a new form of trading although in addition to those mentioned above four can be verified.

The Musogram Record, a product of **Musogram Ltd.** of 23 Denmark St., Charing Cross Road, London W.C. was first offered for sale in December 1909 and described

as *Musogram Long Process Records* - "10 inch 5 minutes" - "12" 8 minutes". Phono-cut and double-sided prices were 3s. and 4s. respectively. To get the best results specially mounted sapphire styli were available at 1s. 6d. each with adaptors at 2s. 6d. to fit to Gramophones, or, at 8s. 6d. each, to fit Columbia Disc Graphophones.

The Musograms were new to the U.K. but the London offices of the Talking Machine World had received a list of twelve Musogram discs as early as November 1907, over two years earlier. Musogram was not mentioned in the U.K. trade papers until June 1908, when it was stated that Musogram Ltd. had a catalogue which was printed in seven languages excluding the English language; however its contents were not revealed. Then, in October 1908, 12" Musogram phono-cut records were among a list of makes obtainable, published in Talking Machine News, but no discs were

advertised by the company nor any listed in the trade papers' monthly releases.

That month, a 12-page Musogram Machine Catalogue was issued, but again, no models were advertised in the U.K. journals probably because the company was stated "to be carrying on a considerable foreign trade". Apropos that last statement, one should reflect on the fact that Musogram Ltd. was incorporated in June 1907 by three ex-officers of Neophone Ltd. who had left by the middle of April 1907; they were Percy J. Packman, the recording expert and inventor, who was appointed chief recorder; A. W. Cameron, the late managing Director of Neophone Ltd., appointed Commercial Manager and Secretary and Henry Hinks-Martin, formerly a manager at Neophone Ltd. and earlier associated with Edison Bell and the Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd., being appointed the Managing Director. Neophone had many branches throughout



The Musogram "Living" Record

the world, and no doubt these Musogram officers had friends in those locations. In any event, a letter heading of Musogram Ltd. dated 2nd June 1908 showed Musogram agencies in Sydney, Melbourne, Wellington N.Z., Cape Town, Toronto, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Durban, Cairo, Alexandria, Kobe, Yokohama, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Santiago, Lima, La Paz, Guayquil, Asuncion, Trinidad and Hamburg. Keeping those agencies supplied can account for the lack of Musogram discs in the U.K. Another factor may have been the patent situation, for the Neophone discs were manufactured with a phono-cut but with a coarser thread. The International Neophone Co. Ltd., of February 1907, did not cease trading until between October 1908 and March 1909 when a coming disc was described as a 12" record with 96 t.p.i. which would play for 9 minutes. In October 1909 Musogram discs of 10" and 12", made by the new "Musone" process, to play at standard speed, vertical cut, were described as being already in manufacture. Those were probably a new type of Musogram record similar to those pressed in 1907 and on sale abroad during 1908.

Many discs were pressed by Mr Cheer's **Irolite Company** at its Inverness Works, Hounslow, Middlesex. At least 270 matrices were made of British artists but only 84 have been logged so far, in addition, three operatic arias by foreign artists from six matrices at the least, were in the U.K. catalogue.

[*The Waltz Song* from Lehar's *The Merry Widow*, sung by unnamed Elsie King, soprano was played over at Neasden.]

Disque Aspir, as *Aspir Disc*, was the product of the **Compagnie Générale D'Électricité, Paris**, which had been founded as early as May 1898 to produce and supply electric current. The first mention of the Aspir discs (an anagram of Paris) in England was in a letter sent by the London

correspondent to the Talking Machine World, of the U.S.A., in which he described the sapphire cut (vertical cut) discs as 11" double-sided recorded, as at May 1909. How much earlier they had appeared in France has not been determined. They were first advertised in the U.K. in December as 11" (28cm) discs at 3s. 6d. each and 12" (30.5cm) at 3s. 9d. each. The records were manufactured by **Établissements Phonographiques D'Ivry** and all were of French artistes with bands, instrumentalists and operatic singers. The records were obtainable through **Aspir (London)**, 15, Victoria Street, London, the trading name and address of George Davies, who had been agent for the French owned Phoebus and Sapphire Phon-Disc records of 1908. Aspir discs were withdrawn from London in April 1911.

[*Micaela's Aria* from Bizet's *Carmen* by a soprano (probably Aline Vallendri) was played on Aspir.]

The Tallyman Operators

The John Bull Record was owned by the **English Record Co. Ltd.** which had been selling as early as October 1909, if not before. The English Record Co. Ltd. was not registered until November, it having acquired the business of the English Record Company which had a business in High Holborn during 1908 and 1909. The first discs were "stencilled" records pressed either from Beka Grand or Favorite matrices held in Germany; all were of 10" size. They were not sold in the usual manner, but under a contract system, whereby a client guaranteed to buy a given number of discs at the standard price of 2s. 6d., usually fifty or so discs spread over a year of purchasing. Upon entering this contract the client was presented with a **Lindström** built gramophone, under the model name of **Ercophone**, which became his sole property upon the fulfilment of the contract. The "tallyman" was the branch agencies' man

who went from door to door with the latest John Bull Records catalogues and supplements inducing clients to choose their records to achieve the quantity they had agreed to buy, then to collect the cash.

This type of trading took off in a big way to judge by the number of stencilled discs which can be found with labels sold during the period before the onset of the First World War, and which labels were never mentioned in the trade journals of that period. **The Britannic Record Company** using Beka Grand and Edison Bell Disc matrices, and the **United Kingdom Record Company**, whose label is unknown, were two companies similar to the English Record Company Ltd. which was by far the most widespread. On the other hand some of the many "stencilled" records found could have been pressed for local dealers who wished to have their own label. Other of the labels using Beka Grand Record matrices were *Alexander*, *The Flag*, *Kalophone Grand*, *National Double Sided Record* etc.

Other "stencilled" records were sold to business houses dealing in the normal fashion. *The Apollo Grand Record* was put on sale in December 1909 by **Craies and Stavridi** of Bunhill Row in the City of London, well-known for its Apollo machines. The records were pressed from J. E. Hough's Bell Discs of 10½" size. Other makes early pressed from Bell Disc matrices were *The "Exo" Records* for **Moorhouse Ltd.** and some of the National Double Sided Records. From the Disc Record Co. Ltd. Nicole masters began to be used for *The Conqueror*, *The Conqueror Regent Record* and other labels of indeterminate vintage.

May 6th 1910 - The End of an Era

When King Edward died on May 6th 1910, there were just three makes of cylinder

records in the market still having new issues released. They were the Edison, the Edison Bell and the Indestructible Phonographic records, which had the Columbia name dropped by the Agents, John G. Murdoch and Co. Ltd. The 4 minute Crystol cylinder of J. E. Hough Ltd. was on sale by January.

The Clarion cylinder and disc records had their last new issues in the previous February although the old stock and masters were to be employed again by the new **Clarion Record Co. Ltd.** formed later in the year, a company that kept supplies of its 2 minute and 4 minute cylinders going until the mid nineteen-twenties.

In the disc trade, Mills' "stencilled" record from J. E. Hough Ltd.'s Bell Disc masters was first listed in the trade papers in January 1910. This was Mills' *Millophone New Record*, but as the catalogue numbers were already advanced, that makes it certain that Mills had his records from the Edison Bell Works almost as soon as J. E. Hough Ltd. went into production of the Bell Disc again during the latter half of 1909. Mills had advertised his new discs in November.

At this time **Selfridge Stores** of Oxford Street, London W. sold old-stock single-side recorded Columbia discs as *The Crown Perfect Record* with stuck-on labelling.

In March 1910, **The Sound Recording Co. Ltd.** was established but at first its Gramavox Records were only sold abroad and did not come to the U.K. market until the summer, although early discs were made especially to accompany cinematograph film shows in Britain.

One of the most important developments of the year was the take-over by Carl Lindström A.G. of Beka Record G.m.b.H in Germany, thus giving that phonograph and gramophone manufacturing concern its first foothold in the disc industry. This later expanded into many continents, before it



National Double-Sided Record



Apollo Gramophone Record

eventually became part of Columbia and then E.M.I. Ltd.

Another development, after the King's death, was the change of label from the Gramophone Concert and Gramophone Monarch to *His Master's Voice*. These labels had already been carrying the famous HMV trade mark. That took place in August, ready for the new 1910-1911 season.

Thus ended nine years and three months during which the phonograph industry gradually became free of all the important restrictive patents and by 1906/7 blossomed to an almost dominant position. However this trade was being undermined by the developing disc industry, particularly in Germany, so that by the new 1908-1909 season, the disc trade was in the ascendancy. By the end of the Great War of

1914-1918 only the Edison Blue Amberol Records (first out in 1912) and the Clarion cylinders, were the only phonograph cylinders still available.

[Gramophone Concert Record G.C. 4-2070 was played to end the afternoon's proceedings at Neasden, which was John McCormack in a Victor Talking Machine Co. recording of Marshall's *When Shadows Gather*.]

Postscript

During the decade to 1910 there was a considerable number of 'makes' of cylinder records on sale under various names which, as a collector of discs, I am not able to comment upon other than those I have already mentioned. Perhaps John Dales or some other member can bring to the fore such obscure names.



Aga-Record

On the disc side, labelled discs are collected about which (aside from the names on the labels) nothing or extremely little is known as to their origin; the proprietor's or factor's names as they never received mention in the trade periodicals of their day. Consequently their period of circulation is quite difficult to discover, even when a title - perhaps - is known to have been on general release elsewhere. It would be foolhardy to ascribe that period to a disc as the problem of re-issue under 'stencilled' records or the acquisition of former companies' matrix stocks by others muddles the chronological story.

One such disc is the *Aga Record*, with British artists thereon. One example has titles from 1908, *Good-bye Olga* and *Oh! Oh! Antonia*. Pressed abroad, with coloured labels in gold and brown, remarkably like *Ariel Grand Records* and the *John Bull Records* colours, they were quite independent of the matrices used on those discs

except that *Bel Canto Records*' matrices, which do appear on some *John Bull* records, appear to be a continuation of the *Aga Records*' 5000 series.

The only company mentioned which may be directly connected with the *Aga record* is the **Aga Schallplatten Vertrieb G.m.b.H** of 45 Bahnstrasse, Schoenberg, Berlin which went into liquidation in 1911. Mention of the fact appeared in *Phonographische Zeitschrift* in December 1911. *Bel Canto Records*, founded in 1909, never came to Britain until after King Edward's death in May 1910. Their labels too were in a similar brown and gold, but carried a beautifully coloured winged butterfly in their centres.

Where to place the *Aga Record* in time is difficult to determine.

THE END

Forthcoming Meetings in London

London Meetings are held at the National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, South Kensington, on the third Thursday evening of the month promptly at **6.45pm** (unless stated otherwise). Members' attention is drawn to the London Meetings Notice on page 100 of issue 188 (October 1992).

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| August 17th | Timothy Massey will be commemorating the life of John McCormack, who died fifty years ago. |
| September 21st | Nigel Douglas the well-known singer and broadcaster will be talking about and giving illustrations from his books and CDs entitled <i>Legendary Voices</i> and <i>More Legendary Voices</i> . |
| October 19th | <i>Live or Wire</i> - George Woolford compares the mechanical and electric recordings of selected artists. |
| November 16th | Howard Hope will present a programme about <i>Motoring</i> |
| December 21st | <i>Annual Christmas Celebration</i> - bring along a favourite record and enjoy a seasonal refreshment. |
| January 18th 1996 | Geoff Edwards - Title to be announced |

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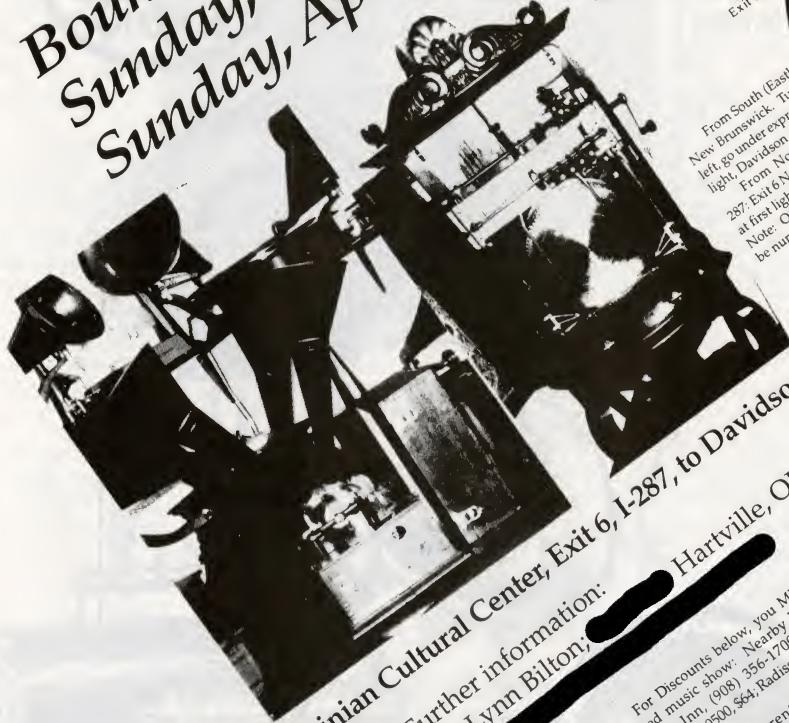
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Sunday, Sept. 24, 1995

Sunday, April 28, 1996



Ukrainian Cultural Center, Exit 6, I-287, to Davidson Ave.
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Lynn Bilton; [REDACTED] Hartville, OH 44632

For Discounts below You MUST mention the
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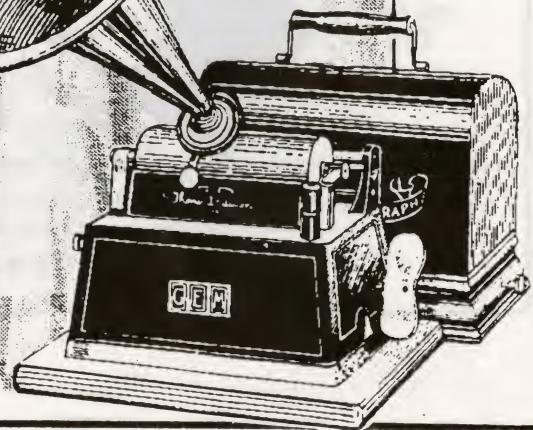
From South (Eastbound) 287: Exit 6, New Brunswick (left), go under expressway, turn at first possible light, Davidson Ave. From North (Westbound) 287: Exit 6 New Brunswick, left at first light, Davidson Ave. Note: Other Exits may not be numbered

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An EMG Mk. 10 'Oversize' Gramophone, English,
circa 1947. Sold on 3rd March 1994 for £5,500.

MECHANICAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

THURSDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER 1995

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For further information, contact: Jon Baddeley [REDACTED]

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SOTHEBY'S
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A SCOTSMAN'S VIEW OF THE COLLECTING SCENE IN THE U.S.A.

by Douglas Lorimer

This year, my wife and I were due to take a trip to America, and it seemed like a good idea to time our holiday with a visit to one of America's most important Record Fairs. As we were to be staying only a few miles from the town of Bound Brook in New Jersey, we chose the fair which until this year had been held in Newark Airport. Bound Brook is a charming and historic little town, and in spring, with all the trees in blossom, it looked very pleasant indeed.

The Ukrainian Cultural Center, where the fair was held, was ideally situated, being close to but not on a main highway, and with lots of car parking space. There was a small canteen with food available, but I don't think too many of us were thinking of food that day! The people could also eat at nearby diners if they wished. We were given a warm welcome and were given little stickers to wear which said HELLO! and gave our names underneath, so that we knew at least who everyone was. When we entered the hall, we were faced with a sea of excited people raking through boxes of records or investigating the many gramophones, graphophones and phonographs on display (although Americans generally refer to them all as phonographs - very confusing). It was very interesting for someone from this side of the Atlantic to see what was on offer.

There were many familiar looking machines, but when you got near them you would invariably find a Victor trademark rather than our familiar H.M.V. Of course, being in America, I expected to see much more Edison material than here, and I was not

disappointed. There were boxes of cylinders and Diamond Discs everywhere of all kinds, but almost all Edison. Even Columbia cylinders seemed in a minority, and Pathé were almost non-existent (again, not really surprising). The boxes of records were very odd to a British collector - almost everyone had piles of those Little Wonder records, some even had albums of them. These were generally single-sided with etched labels making them look like tiny (they are only 6") Edison discs.

Emerson records were also quite plentiful, with various designs of label and size. In fact, small records were definitely the most interesting aspect to me. There were lots of early 7" Victors and even some pre-Victor "Improved Records". Berliners were not very much in evidence - in fact I only found one stall selling these, but there were some excellent things there, and with prices from \$50 to \$80 each, not too bad for such early records.

The most expensive record I saw there was a 14" Victor Special Record, and even though it was only of a military band it was on sale for \$500! The unexpected thing for me was the surprising lack of serious 12" records - there were some, and mainly operatic (I did find two or three acoustic orchestral records on one stall, but very little else).

I was also very surprised that there were not a lot of 78rpm albums - perhaps they are so common over there that nobody even tries to sell them. A few hopefuls had LP's for sale, but as these were generally very ordinary, they were not doing much

trade. I was lucky enough however to find an RCA Victor Program Transcription (those very early LP's made by RCA in the early 1930's). My joy in finding this really made the trip worthwhile!

The equipment on display was truly mouth-watering - I have never seen so many excellent early machines under one roof, and, although a trade mark Gramophone would set you back around \$4000 as would some of the more handsome horn gramophones, you could acquire a very nice machine for much less.

The stall owners were all very helpful and friendly, and I certainly would go back again if I was lucky enough to arrange my holiday at the right time. If you were going there, remember that you are in an area rich in gramophone history. Camden is not far away, and Brunswick is there too, as well as Edison, although you have to visit Orange to see the Edison factory.

If you have time it is very worth while to search around local antique shops, although Flea Markets are definitely worth finding - these are the equivalent of our car boot sales, only on a larger scale. You

probably would find more LP than 78 material at these, although you might just be lucky.

The little towns around Bound Brook are very well worth a visit, and New York is itself only about an hour or so away. There are several excellent flea markets in New York at weekends, where many strange and wonderful things can be seen. Remember too that New York is just the place to find that elusive historic recording on CD that no one seems to have.

Back at the fair at Bound Brook, one thing to delight collectors was the amount of catalogues on sale. You could also get a video of Edison's film of *The Great Train Robbery*, and several stalls had historic recordings available on cassette or CD. So there really was something for everybody - even someone who didn't know much about our hobby would I am sure enjoy just looking at so many wonderful old machines. We have made some new friends there and hope someday to see some of them over here. Until then, here's to the next fair at Bound Brook!

The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society - Midland Area Group
ANNUAL PHONOFAIR AND RECORD COLLECTORS' BAZAAR

**Saturday 23rd September 1995, 10.00am - 400pm
St. Matthews Church Hall**

Junction of East Park Way/Willenhall Road (A454 Wolverhampton - Walsall Road) Wolverhampton. Motorists leave M6 at Junction 10 and follow signs to Wolverhampton. Wolverhampton - Walsall buses pass venue every few minutes. Regular InterCity Rail Services to Wolverhampton - Bus station adjacent.

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Record Stalls (Cylinders to CDs), Vintage Gramophones, Phonographs, Record Catalogues, Books, Gramophone Needles and Refreshments

Stalls available. Call Geoff Howl on [REDACTED]

LEONARD L. WATTS



Colin Johnson and Len Watts.
Photograph by courtesy of Colin Johnson

Members of the Society who knew him well will be grieved to hear of the death of Len Watts in May at the age of 70. A number of us were at his funeral and paid our last respects to an old friend.

Len's membership goes back to the days when the Society met at the *Horse and Groom* in Shoreditch, and he progressed to becoming Chairman in the early 1970s, thereafter remaining a useful member of the Committee. For years he represented the Society at record fairs over much of the country and was at Northampton on April 29th this year.

He took it upon himself to start a correspondence with the baritone, the late George Baker, who was delighted to be invited to Society evenings to hear some of his early records and to talk about his career, and to know he was still remembered.

Few years passed without one of Len's Pathé record programmes using his own-made equipment, and most of the slides of record labels used to accompany talks were from his camera.

He was always interesting and most knowledgeable, and will be much missed.

George Frow

About 30 years ago I received a letter 'out of the blue' from Len Watts enquiring if I knew anyone interested in Pathé vertically-cut records. Following my reply I was able to introduce him to the Society, where although the meetings at that time mainly featured Blue Amberol cylinders, he soon found kindred spirits among our members. Since then he went on to greatly enlarge his specialist Pathé collection and share his extensive knowledge of them with us.

Not content to merely collect and listen, Len systematically listed Pathé records, noting details from members' collections and every original catalogue he could borrow or purchase. I have not seen his listings for several years when they were already formidable and very impressive in content.

Len worked for London Transport in special maintenance work on buses and the heavy equipment required. In private life he was skilled mechanically and could repair phonographs, old clocks, player pianos et alia. as well as various repairs to his home. When his mother reached a very advanced age he constructed a lift to carry her up the stairs to her bedroom. At one stage he owned a vintage car (an Essex?) and during reconstructing the body he arrived at the *Horse and Groom* sitting in just a framework looking like a man in a mobile cage!

As a person he was a humble man who took pleasure in doing his fellow human creatures a good turn when possible. After retiring he undertook voluntary work to help other 'old people', such as putting up shelves in a kitchen, fixing a window blind, driving someone to the shops, etc. I'm certain that many members can recall friendly favours, swaps and encounters with Len watts who helped our Society in so many quiet ways. We were privileged to have him as a member.

Ernie Bayly

The sudden departure of Len is a sad blow to all who knew him. My first contact with him was back in 1970 when he sent me spare parts for a phonograph on behalf of the Society, with an explanation of how to fit them. I went to a London meeting some weeks later to find that he was chairing the proceedings, looking after the books and spares and giving the talk which was, of course, on his favourite subject, Pathé records.

I soon learnt that he would never refuse a request to undertake all sorts of tasks and would never ask for thanks. Often, when we shared a stall at one of the record bazaars he would volunteer to repair a gramophone motor for a complete stranger and post it back later without asking for any reward. His kindness and generosity knew no bounds.

We went to many record fairs and Phonofairs together over the years and I found his companionship on the long journeys most enjoyable.

Dave Roberts

Any mention of Len watts and one associates him with Pathé. He was a dedicated collector and researcher for many years. On a personal level, we only corresponded occasionally. he always responded promptly and was only too willing to share his vast knowledge. Len was a keen Society member who made every effort to attend the Phonofair and other functions. latterly he was not in the best of health but always found the time for a casual chat, especially if the

subject involved Pathé. I sincerely hope that his research work will one day be published as a fitting tribute to a most likeable and warm hearted man. Len will be sorely missed.

John S. Dales

May I be permitted to add to the many tributes which I am sure are being paid in the next edition of *Hillandale News* to our much-missed fellow C.L.P.G.S. member Len Watts. 'Fellow member' seems to be a totally inadequate description for a man who was so much more than just a collector and enthusiast.

I first met Len when I attended my initial London meetings shortly after joining the C.L.P.G.S. in the early 1980s. Over the years our friendship grew, and Len - "Uncle Len" to my family - was a regular visitor to our home laden down with cakes for my wife, presents for our my daughter and the inevitable box of records for me, usually including some scarce and collectable Pathés. "I thought you might like these, they are duplicates, but they're quite nice!" he would say.

I find it hard to believe that we will never see that battered car on our drive again, spilling out Len and his treasures, and that I will never again answer the 'phone around midnight to hear those familiar tones from Twickenham. I also have to stop myself thinking "I'll give Len a ring...he'll know the answer...he'll be able to re-spring that motor...he'll be able to fix that clock"" or whatever.

I like to think that where Len is now, he is in earnest conversation with the Pathé Frères, asking just why they made such a complication of their catalogue numbers...why they stuck to hill and dale recording...why they retained centre starts until 1915 (or was it 1916!) and the host of other questions that he never managed to get answered in the all-too-short time that we knew him.

Colin Johnson

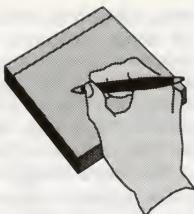
Len Watts, along with Rick Hardy, I had the pleasure of entertaining at my home only a few short weeks before he died. Even then, when not a fit man, Len thought little of driving from London and back - a trip of some 500 miles - all in one day.

I remember, in particular, leaving a pile of Pathé discs in a place where they would catch his eye and the pleasure and satisfaction I had when I gave him those that were not even in his vast Pathé storehouse.

Friends of Len will know that his magnum opus on Pathé material is unpublished. Cannot our Society or those of us who knew that Len was a world authority on Pathé see to it that he has **his** memorial with the publication of his life's work?

Joe Pengelly

LETTERS



Research Appeal

Dear Chris,

In 1972 the Society published a catalogue of Edison Bell brown wax cylinders which was compiled by the late Sydney Carter. Since then I have accumulated details of almost 500 additional titles and some amendments. The updated list now looks impressive, but even so several dozen titles remain to be identified and these are mostly from the 1901/02 period.

Surviving Edison Bell catalogues are thin on the ground, but they exist here and there in private collections. I would be most grateful to receive details, especially photocopies, of catalogues nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8 that were issued between 1899 and 1903. Also, any pre 1903 supplements and listings, including the 'Concert-Grand' and 'Indestructible' cylinders that used the same numbering system, would be most welcome.

The later Edison Bell waxes, referred to as 'Populars' had a flat end with 'Edison Bell Record' and 'trade mark' engraved. The wax colour was a fairly consistent medium brown. However, some were produced for a short period that were either an intense dark brown or black colour. I would again be pleased to receive details of these. The title and artist would be sufficient if the lid label showing the catalogue number is missing.

I should be only too happy to reimburse costs where requested.

Thank you,

John S. Dales, [REDACTED] Rednal,
Birmingham B45 8AB

Walter Welch

Dear Chris,

I was much saddened to hear of the recent death of Walter Welch in the USA. I met Walter back in 1981 when he invited my wife and I to visit him at Syracuse. He met us at the airport, wined and dined us and later showed us the Syracuse University Audio Archive, so very much his creation.

I remember his playing to us, simultaneously, two Edison Diamond Discs of the same take on an Edison machine with the two sound sources locked together by some gunnery components from a US warship! Certainly a man of parts. His memory, of course, will be his *From Tin Foil To Stereo* which he co-authored with Oliver Read. As a wide-ranging authority on its subjects it stands supreme.

As ever,

Joe Pengelly, Mannamead, Plymouth

The Sinking of the Titanic

Dear Chris,

The Sinking of the Titanic, about which Frank Andrews wrote originally, drew a response from W. Shaman who described a recording by Vernon Dalhart of the tune, but could find no author.

The tune was originally recorded by Ernest V. Stoneman for Okeh records in 1924. It was not released. It was re-recorded by Stoneman in 1925. The song launched Stoneman's career. He claimed authorship of the melody, and stated in the 1960s that he originally got the lyrics from a published poem, although scholarly research on the subject suggest Stoneman probably wrote the entire song himself, both music and lyrics. (See Ivan Tribe's biography *The Stonemans* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993, pp 39-42.)

Joel Whitburn in his efforts to reconstruct how popular the song was, suggested that the song would have entered the country charts in mid-May 1925, and would have been there for 100 weeks, peaking out at number 3.

The Sinking of the Titanic, describing a British shipwreck, has become one of the most important of American ballads.

Sincerely yours,

George H. Conklin, Durham, NC, USA

Finial turntable

Dear Chris,

In answer to the letter from Mr Daniel Rees in issue 203 re the laser turntable featured in *Tomorrow's World*, I can confirm that this was indeed the Finial turntable in its latest guise and it is now available at £20,000 from the British agent The Serious Audio Company at 20 Diglands Avenue, New Mills, Stockport, Cheshire SK12 4JD.

Yours sincerely,

Malcolm B. Smith, Sheffield

Recorded record speeds

Dear Chris,

Relative to the report in issue 203 on Peter Copeland's February lecture on *Recorded Record Speeds* he is reported as saying: "HMV finally blotted their copy book by issuing VA and VB white label series of archive re-issued recordings all marked at 78rpm." Well, after electrical recording came in, in 1925, most of all archive material and other material was re-recorded on to new waxes whatever their original speed was, thereby establishing 78rpm as the official speed of record discs.

In later days, none of the archive issues were pressed using the old stampers, which were more or less worn out anyway, and major runs were made by new material.

My brother, who was a sound recordist in the film studios for many years, told me this, after having seen it all done at the Hayes factory when he visited there on business connected with his job.

He also told me, that when he when Fred Gaisberg, Fred was very kind and considerate and was always keen to show the 'boys' from the movie studios around and tell them of any new developments in the record industry.

Yours sincerely,
Harold Moss, Stockport, Cheshire

{You're not quite right about none of the issues in the 'Archive' series being issued from old stampers. I know some issues were dubbings but Patti's version of Yradier's *La Calasera*, for instance, was pressed from an original stamper. Ed.]

Corrigendum, ERA - another error

Dear Editor,

With reference to part 5 of my *The British Record Industry during the Reign of King Edward VII* in *Hillandale News* No.203, April 1995, it has been pointed out to me, by member and colleague, Arthur Badrock, that ERA labelled records manufactured from Beka Grand Records' matrices did, in fact, have pressings from the 40,000 series (viz. page 254 last 3 lines column 1).

This was an avoidable mistake on my part, for I do have ERA discs marked in on my Beka matrices listings, but I never consulted those when writing my piece, but went to my ERA label file in which I had not up-dated the known discs.

With the introduction of the ERA discs in November 1907, there is known to have been a minimum of 38 single-sided discs issued. That is an absolute mini-

mum, allowing for one double-sided disc each for the 19 artists mentioned. All were numbered in the repertoire number blocks used by Beka Records, from the first, and applied internationally as far as Europe was concerned. There is the possibility that some of those ERA discs had no equivalent issues on Beka Grands in the UK. I now know, from my 40,000 matrix listings, that four examples from that series, appeared only on ERA in the UK between the employment of the series between May 1907 and December 1908. 40378 is the highest matrix number known on ERA. This was issued on a Beka Grand Record in November 1908.

Arthur Badrock and myself would be grateful for any details of all ERA records, for the data is useful in filling in gaps in our Beka matrix listings.

I apologise for the misinformation in Issue 203.

With head bowed down,

Frank Andrews, [REDACTED] Neasden, London NW10 0HA

Ruby Helder (1)

Dear Chris,

Many thanks for the latest *Hillandale News*. Readers may be interested in having the exact dates of Ruby Helder's American Columbia records. These are as follows:

New York, December 22 1913:

Matrices 36842-1, 36843-1 and 36844-2.

New York, March 28 1917:

Matrix 47442-3, A2401 & 2938 Berceuse: *Angels Guard Thee from Jocelyn* by Godard

New York, April 3 1917:

Matrix 47455-1, A2401 & 2938 *When You and I were Young, Maggie* by Butterfield

Matrix 47456-1-2 rejected *Mavis* by Craxton

New York, July 18 1917:

Matrix 47456-3-4-5 rejected *Mavis* by Craxton

Regarding the J. E. Hough/Edison Bell session, the correct matrix number of *Tom Bowling* is 2607, issued on Velvet Face 1029 in February 1911, which corrects the estimated recording date to c. December 1910. Matrix 2611 is *My Pretty Jane*, which is on the other side of Tom Bowling. I am sure the correct title of matrix 2606 is *Once Again*, not *Price Again*, which makes no sense.

My best, as ever,

Brian Rust, Swanage, Dorset

{Many thanks for these details. I shall correct our archive copy of the article. Ed.]

Ruby Helder (2)

Dear Sir,

I was very interested to read the article about Ruby Helder by Charles Haynes in the last edition of *Hillandale News* (No.204, June 1995). I possess six of her recordings on HMV and Columbia and had been intrigued at the paucity of biographical details.

I even utilised a computer in my office to run a programme on "Ruby Helder" and "Miss Ruby Helder" to discover if by chance she performed under a pseudonym which may have been an anagram of her own name. That was unhelpful, but it did make for a few entertaining phrases i.e. "Bye hurdler" and "Hurry, bleed". Further offerings may have been appropriate considering what we learn about Miss Helder's weakness: "My, she is blurred!" and "Hey! Red rum bliss!". Interesting, but not much use for producing proper names!

I then heard of the outrageous suggestion that Ruby Helder could have been a man in "drag". I am glad that Mr Haynes did not consider the suggestion worthy of anything more than a passing comment.

It was about this time that I spotted for sale in a record and book list, a copy of the June 1911 edition of *The Sound Wave*, incorporating an article about "Miss Ruby Helder, the Lady Tenor". The magazine had already been sold, but I am indebted to Bernard J. Bury of Halifax in Yorkshire, for furnishing me with a photocopy of the article and the associated illustration.

I can do no better than quote Bernard's covering note to me: "This is no fellow! A real lady I think."

Yours faithfully,

Colin Johnson, Minster-on-Sea, Sheerness, Kent

Help Please!

Dear Editor,

Helen Sutherland Exhibition

Eden Arts is planning an exhibition about an art collector and Patron who lived near Ullswater between 1939 and 1964. She also had a keen interest in music and poetry and owned a very distinctive electric gramophone which had a cabinet and a large white horn. This gramophone was sold at her house sale on 7th January 1966 to someone called Walker.

If any of your readers know anything about such a gramophone we would be interested to trace the present owner.

Yours sincerely,

C. A. Treloar, [REDACTED] Penrith,
Cumbria CA11 7TP

MISS RUBY HELDER, THE LADY TENOR.

We give herewith a portrait of Miss Ruby Helder, whose wonderful tenor records on the Edison Bell make have caused such a stir in the gramophone world. Miss Helder, as may be seen, is a charming young lady in "the April promise of her spring." She has but recently emerged from her teens, and certainly no one to hear her cultured tenor voice in her favourite songs would imagine that the former was the property of such a pleasing member of the weaker sex. Miss Helder made a great success at the recent



benefit concert for Sir Charles Santley, but her name and fame is great throughout the kingdom, where she has toured with the greatest success. Her first concert at the Queen's Hall, on June 30, 1909, inspired the musical critic of *Black and White* to say "she is a pretty, slight girl of 18, endowed with a pure tenor voice of wonderful range and power. Wednesday's audience greeted her with extraordinary enthusiasm, and showed their appreciation by repeated encores." We can certainly advise gramophonists everywhere to hear Miss Helder's unique voice, for it will certainly please them.

A LOVER OF CYLINDERS.

Had a very powerful machine—it was adapted to take 2 and 4-min. Records. He spent pounds on Diaphragms and Attachments, which were no improvement. He got tired of wasting money. Lloyd Thomas arranged for him to hear an Edison Triumph fitted with Mod. "O" Reproducer and Cygnet Horn. That settled it. All the other paraphernalia has been disposed of and our Friend is delighted and happy with his Triumph and Amberola. Why not join him, Sir. ASK

LLOYD THOMAS, 121, Alexandra Road, Hornsey.

N.B.—Amberols are long-lived if you use Edison Repros.

EMG Mark 10b

Dear Editor,

I have recently reconditioned the sound-box of my EMG Mark 10b gramophone as the volume seemed poor and the diaphragm rings and various small washers were perished or missing. The result is quite successful but I would greatly appreciate particular advice, if some knowledgeable and kind reader would oblige. Enclosed is a sketch of part of the sound-box.

Two of the four spring clips which hold the diaphragm lever in place on the fulcrums have been missing since I got the gramophone and had been replaced with bits of wire. I made two new spring clips to the same pattern as the existing two and of similar metal. To this pattern the side springs reach to the opposite sides of the lever base plate. Is that as it should be? These four clips had one fibre washer each under the screw head. As the screws are quite long and the clips at a steep angle, should there be a second washer or spacer under each clip?

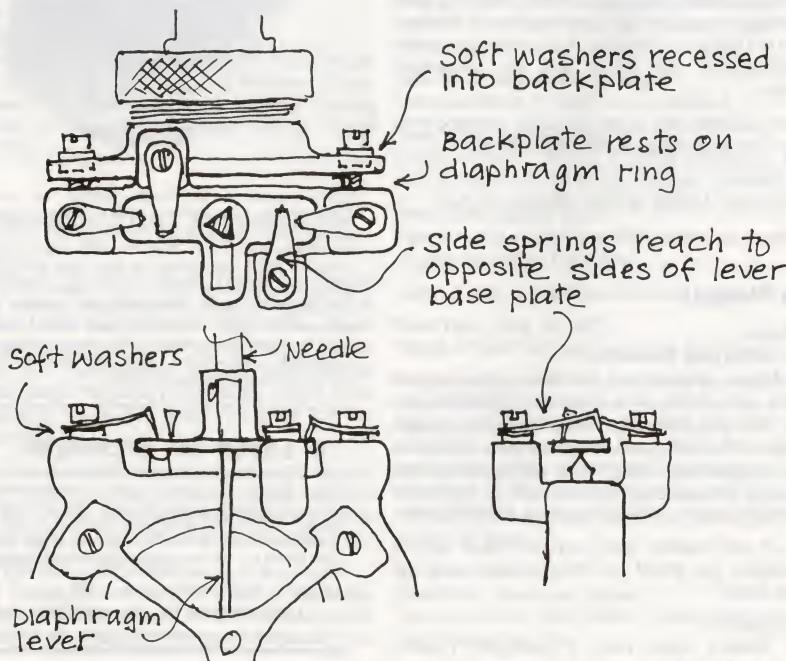
The sound-box backplate is held in place by three screws which had crumbly material in the recessed screw hole which I replaced with rubber washers so that the backplate is suspended between them and the diaphragm ring. Is this correct?

Now the big joke! Having taken the sound-box apart, I found the remains of a fair sized moth inside with its head stuck behind the diaphragm. I then discovered that the part of the horn inside the cabinet, from sound arm to base of the big horn, was filled full of dead moths, not having been cleaned out for the 35 years that I have had the gramophone and probably not since it was brought to Antigua in the late 1940s. Anyone else with an external horn gramophone in moth country take note!

Incidentally, I found the number 2005 die stamped onto the cabinet, close to the sound arm base. Is there any record of how many EMGs or EMG Mark 10bs were made? I have reason to think that this one may be the last one.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Smith, [REDACTED] Antigua, West Indies



REVIEWS



Those Wind Up Days by John D. Vose

The sea hath, we are led to believe, its pearls, and no doubt Mr Vose is similarly endowed, though in the case of his latest, mercifully slim, volume the pearls, such as they are, are all at sea. 'A fascinating read for all who love the music and great artists of the past' announces the book's cover, a bold claim indeed, implying that the contents will entertain and inform the novice, yet to be convinced that the phenomenon of the single-sided record is not after all due to a technical oversight, as well as the expert, versed in the love of correct speeds and anxious to learn precisely to what extent Signor de Lucia transposed down from score keys.

Unfortunately, the information contained in this book is, for the most part, so wildly and hopelessly incorrect, as to be of no interest to anybody whatsoever. We are blithely informed that Zonophone mainly catered for popular taste, that Caruso was the first serious artist to make records, that Patti was on the verge of retirement in 1905, that *Merrie England* was written for Webster Booth and Anne Ziegler, that there were tenor castrati, that the counter tenor was a rather high soprano male voice' that Stanley Holloway specialised in Yorkshire monologues such as *Runcorn Ferry* and that Chaliapin did not record until 1903.

Mr Vose has embellished, if that is not too strong a term, his book with numerous illustrations the captions to which are singularly laconic. A radiogram is described as 'a very early radiogram', and early phonograph machines as "early phonograph machines". The pictures themselves are small, grey and grainy but at least the camera cannot lie, though the caption writer hardly assists its quest for truth. I particularly liked the description of Joseph Hislop as a 'domestic' tenor, presumably to distinguish from the nasty feral type, who when in season, would do nameless things against the scenery.

This farrago of nonsense has a prose style all of its own, unhampered by the inhibiting attentions of the proof reader. Don Quixote's companion was appar-

ently Sacho Panza and Webster Booth was an oratorio singer of distinction. Nor is self-conscious humour lacking, a humour as desolating as the artful skittiness of a provincial soubrette who sees her 'sell by' date looming ever nearer. 'Does not play CDs' is the caption beneath a picture of a phonograph. In all one wishes to paraphrase the song immortalised by the lady styled 'Madame' Clara Butt by Mr Vose:

'A fairy went a marketing
She found a little book
She found it at a record fair
And gave it a brief look
She took and she read it
For half a weary day
Then flushed it down her tiny loo
And let it float away.'

On a more serious note, one feels a sense of shame and anger for the artists who in all sincerity gave their best to the early recording technicians and also that the sympathetic taste of posterity should have been so misrepresented. One thinks of Patti, dying of heart disease, Caruso coughing out his life's blood in the wings of the Metropolitan and of Albani struggling to survive in dignified poverty. Ultimately Mr Vose stands convicted of the unforgivable discourtesy, contempt for the dead.

Nipperini (Sig.)

(This book is available price £2.50 plus postage from John D. Vose, [REDACTED] Blackpool FY2 9AW. Ed)

DATES Part 1 - Commercial (second revised edition) by Eddie Shaw

The first edition of **Date About all Those English Seventy-eights (DATES) part 1** appeared in February 1994, and was reviewed in *Hillendale News* 201 (December 1994, pp195-7). This second edition (dated February 1995) makes a number of improvements, and I shall deal here with the various changes which have (or have not) been made - interested readers may refer to the December 1994 magazine for further details, and Eddie himself announced various modifications in a letter (*Hillendale News* 202, February 1995, pp231-2).

The overall presentation of the new booklet is now very much improved by two quite simple means: the use of transparent covers, and a 'slide' binder (which, alas, does not allow the booklet to lie flat). The number of pages has been increased by 50% to 78,

and these are now numbered (no doubt to the relief of his printers). In addition, the typeface has been changed from serif to sans-serif and has been slightly enlarged. However, the reproduction of the typeface still suffers badly from ragged printing (dot-matrix) reproduced lithographically - some characters virtually disappear. If Eddie could use a very much better printer for his original camera-ready copy, he might actually be able to reduce the type size. In case he thinks that this is just my problem, I should remark in passing that I can quite easily read (unaided) the smallest type in the old Compact edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, which in the supplementary Volume 3 is printed perfectly at twenty-four lines to the inch!

Two notable and useful modifications have been made to the contents, the addition of principal label colours (including Decca's so-called 'gold' - which is really yellow), and a complete listing of all known UK label types, giving references to DATES Part 2 (private, etc issues) and Part 3 (UK issues pressed abroad), to be published at a later date. The extra confidence this second change engenders is quite significant and worthwhile, and well repays the small extra space which it entails; the true scope of Parts 1, 2 and 3 of DATES is thereby made much clearer. However, I would still maintain that the criterion "made in England" is rather unsatisfactory, as it leads to a vast and unwieldy clutter of obscure prefix series which are not only unlikely to be found, but unlikely ever to be properly listed in such a general publication as this - they thus constitute a sort of permanent "background noise." The question also comes to mind - what will he do about records made in Scotland?

In my first review, I suggested that source references might be given against particular labels, so that those interested might pursue (for instance) a published complete listing of Neophone or Marathon discs in greater detail. Eddie's reluctance to do this (for reasons of space) is understandable, but it is a pity to shut the door on cross-checks by experts or further enquiry by novices. To be quite honest, I think such references would be a lot more useful than his proposed label illustrations, if rather less alluring, and could even (dare I say it) replace the endless scraps of terminally skeletal foreign listings.

Nevertheless, details of the many entries in this survey seem to have made some general progress, largely owing to new information, but partly in answer to the criticisms of the first edition. For instance the listing of HMV D series previously showed an infirmity of purpose, as some of the dates were those of recording and not of issue as stated by the aim of the book - this aspect has been tidied up.

There remain, of course, some things which could be amended or added to - for instance, an indication within the HMV C, D etc series of the difference between original ("slide") and later replacement ("drop") automatic couplings; and a mention of Columbia DBBs (the original prefix of the DB series) could usefully be included (as with DBX and LBX). A much more serious oddity which I omitted to mention last time (and which I would expect to have been taken up by others) is the wholesale inclusion of the entire Edison disc output under 'Edison Bell' - I spotted it again this time, when unexpected Edison Bell 'Recreation' [sic] and 'LP' discs caught my eye! And I may be wrong, but I would not expect Edison discs ever to have been "made in England."

I also had a peek at the Decca section, having made a point of trying to unravel these series last time. Along with corrections have arisen new problems: for instance, the X series has now been listed - but marked as a successor to the S series! (The black-label S series was withdrawn in 1929 and replaced quickly by the cheaper black K series. The 'gold' Xs appeared some years later.) The business about the A series is still a mess, but without references for the sources of the information given I cannot be bothered to work out what on earth has gone wrong this time... Once again S10001 is mentioned, and also a Z7 - I wonder what they are? I suppose we shall never know.

Whether new editions of this budding *magnum opus* are to become an annual affair remains to be seen, nor is it clear to me whether every revision is fair game for formal review. No doubt there will be many more revised versions; Eddie Shaw wisely leaves a standing invitation for new and revised material, but he may consider whether inherently interim publications might sometimes be candidates for advertising in other ways.

Altogether, it is a book of interest and no little usefulness to collectors with some experience: actually to *list* all known UK labels is in itself a most useful achievement! The remaining caveats I have mentioned will no doubt evaporate with time and future developments, but in the meantime I can make a cautious recommendation.

Peter Adamson

{**Date About all Those English Seventy-eights - Part 1 (Commercial)**, second revised edition (ISBN 0 9524896 0 0) is available, price £6 (UK), £7 Europe, £8 rest of the world, all including postage, direct from the author, Eddie Shaw, [REDACTED] London EC1Y 8NQ, UK. Ed.}

REPORTS



London Meeting, March 16th 1995

It is probably human nature to tamper with recordings when offering them up for resale. Time and tide is said to take its toll, and listening to Chris Hamilton's selection for his talk this year, makes the obsolete 78 a desirable object when comparisons are made.

Chris in his programme *It's not what it seems (2)* played us some 11 recordings transferred from 78s electrically recorded between 1926 and 1941 and one acoustic recording of John McCormack from a 1909 Odeon. The originals were transferred onto DAT for Chris by Peter Adamson, using his (Peter's) equipment. Quite what equipment was used to transfer Columbia 9147 of Binnie Hale and Jack Buchanan singing *Who?* from *Sunny* on Columbia SEG 7767 (45rpm extended play) is unknown, but this transfer couldn't be described as high fidelity! Elsie Randolph and Jack Buchanan fared little better on the transfer by John Wadeley of *Let's say goodbye till the morning* from *Sunny* on World Records SH 240. Worse was to follow from products distributed by Moidart Music Ltd. Maggie Teyte appeared to be in a field at the end of a passageway on MIDCD 001. Her very distinctive voice in *Comin' thro' the rye* on HMV DA 1804 was illustrated to perfection in the DAT transfer by Peter Adamson. Father Sydney MacEwan sang a Gaelic song *Mnathan A'Ghlinne So* (Women of the glen) accompanied by a small band and a clairnach (Gaelic harp). Quite how the engineers lost all the treble and made the harp play bass notes I don't know, but hopefully this sort of transfer will soon become a lost art.

On larger works, like Walton's *Symphony No.1* released by Decca on their X series in 1936 with the Queen's Hall Orchestra conducted by Sir Henry Wood, modern equipment appears to lose all the crackle and top range of instruments and generally leave a heaviness which makes the recording dull and lacklustre. Try Dutton Laboratories CDAX 8003 and see what I mean or maybe Dutton Laboratories CDAX 7010 where Beniamino Gigli singing *Ingemisco* from Verdi's *Requiem* is made to sound like a

baritone and quite unrecognisable. While Gigli is not everybody's choice of singer he deserves better reproduction than this. The transfer of the original on HMV DB 8991 by Peter Adamson brought out the delicacy of Gigli's singing and made the voice instantly recognisable as Gigli's! As Chris rightly said, the current specialists in the art of transferring historical and important performances to CD or any other medium, have a duty, in honour to the artists concerned, to provide as faithful transfers as possible.

One other recording which has suffered from the vagaries of the inept transfer engineer over the years is the one made in 1930 by Telefunken of excerpts from Kurt Weill's *Threepenny Opera*. *Barbarasong* with Lotte Lenya was originally issued on Telefunken A 754. By the time it appeared on Telestar A 754 (Scandinavian Telefunken) it was a dubbing. The LP transfer on Teldec 6.41911 AJ was a dubbing of Telestar A 754 and so was the transfer on CD on Capriccio 10 346. One can imagine the horrendous results! It was quite revelatory to hear Peter Adamson's transfer from the original Telefunken disc. Lotte Lenya sounded like the young woman she really was and the spoken commentaries in German by Kurt Gernon were quite clear with sibilants.

Members at the meeting listened and commented on the above offerings with their comparisons. Readers who have not yet entered into the field of CD and have disposed of all their LPs may well be considering updating the quality of their existing playing systems. They should try out the CDs they have chosen before they buy. Chris, in his programme, has shown that it is possible to get plenty of enjoyment provided the transfers are done with musical sense, skill and taste.

George Woolford

London Meeting, May 19th 1995

Collectors familiar with the excellent products which are sold under the Symposium label will not be surprised to learn that its creator, Eliot Levin has talents in mechanical as well as musical fields.

Our Society was treated to a preview of Mr Levin's latest venture - a commercially produced electrical phonograph (on a limited subscription basis). Following its rival, the Gramophone, Mr Levin's phonograph employs a small rotating turntable onto which various sizes of tapered sleeves are dropped and locked into place. This gives a clear area onto which a cylinder is dropped (like a conventional set up some packing material is required when cylinders have become

warped). The motor runs from 60rpm to 200rpm and obviously stroboscopes are beneficial here. A belt under the base board easily changes the pitch from 100 grooves to 200 grooves per inch depending on whether 2 or 4 minute cylinders are to be played. A 'cogged' belt drives the drive thread. Expert Stylus Company supplied the Shure M44 cartridge and styli (0.008 inch for 2-minute cylinders and 0.0037 inch for 4-minute cylinders). These styli can be changed to suit as in an Edison phonograph.

Phono leads plug straight into a conventional amplifier or pre-amplifier and Mr Levin can supply sleeves for every possible dimension of cylinder making this a truly universal machine.

The machine is unconventional in that cylinders are played while positioned vertically and once engaged, the sprung-arm ascends (within a tower structure) when in play. Some members of the audience had brought their favourite cylinders along so that they could hear them on this machine. We found that 2-minute wax cylinders (standard size) played perfectly while a moulded Edison Bell cylinder skipped a bit. Wax Pathé intermediate cylinders played without problem (but the volume was not any better than their standard size cylinders). Problems appeared more in the tracking with both Amberols and Blue Amberols. These tended to distort especially the Blue ones with their celluloid surface and plaster of paris cores. Like with all records, perfect copies tended to give the best results.

Mr Levin informed us that all the machines are sold but those interested its reproduction qualities will be pleased to learn that a CD will soon be issued with transfers (done with the machine he demonstrated) taken from operatic Blue and Purple Amberols. This was an extremely enjoyable evening where various technical aspects were aired and the audience able to participate in an innovation which, like Edison's developments, must have taken many hours of refinement.

George Woolford

Midlands Group Meeting, Carrs Lane Methodist Centre, Birmingham, 20th May 1995

The attendance was somewhat depleted with some of the regulars being absent. However there were still enough present to justify listening to a jazz night, with two separate programmes, as is our usual format these days.

Secretary Phil Bennett was first with *Ted Lewis - The Columbia Years*. We were given a summary of the

history of Ted who was born in 1892 as Theodore Friedman from a Jewish immigrant family. Strongly influenced by the sound of The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, he joined Earl Fuller's Famous Jazz Band in 1917 and by 1919 was virtually the leader.

Lewis' first recordings were made in September 1919 and from this session Phil let us hear *Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives To Me* on American Columbia A2798. This was not issued in the UK. We were then regaled with another thirteen 78s from Ted's Columbia period, played in chronological order. Phil told us many interesting and informative facts as he went along. With the advent of electrical recording in 1925 Columbia re-recorded many of Ted's classic numbers from the early 1920s. One item was never issued at the time, but Phil played it from a tape dubbed from a test pressing owned by Ted Lewis and never issued commercially. The piece was *Bring Back Those Minstrel Days*. The test pressing now resides in the Ted Lewis Museum in Circleville, Ohio - the town of Lewis' birth. Ted was famous for his catchphrase "Is everybody happy?", and we heard him utter this in his 1931 recording of *Dallas Blues*.

There was an intriguing end to Phil's talk. Ted Lewis' main instrument throughout his career was the clarinet, and his tone was thin and spidery. Bearing in mind the sound the band produced, particularly in the early days, incorporating the clarinet, we were somewhat surprised when Phil played a recording of 'wailing' Eastern European music with remarkable similarity to the Lewis sound. Phil posed a question: Was Ted pioneering early Dixieland jazz or this Eastern European style?

After the break Ed Parker continued the jazz theme in his talk *Dixieland, Trad. and New Orleans Revival*. Ed explained that the pre-war swing era became played out, and there was a resurgence in the 1940s of the earlier jazz scene (although a few bands always were faithful to this style). Some of the semi-legendary 1920s jazz figures such as Bunk Johnson, George Lewis and Kid Ory began to feature in this revival.

To illustrate the American scene, amongst others we heard were The Firehouse 5 plus 2 in their version of *Chinatown, My Chinatown* and the Bunk Johnson/Sidney Bechet band playing *Lord Let Me in the Lifeboat*. To illustrate an artist whose style never changed we heard *Panama* by Jelly Roll Morton.

The British scene was not ignored, and the word 'Trad.' is usually ascribed to the revivalist style of the bands of Chris Barber, Humphrey Lyttelton, Steve Lane and Ken Colyer. For example we heard *High Society* by the Barber band, Lyttelton with *Melancholy Blues* and the Manchester based Saints Jazz Band's version of *Who Walks In When I Walk Out*.

Ed finished with Kid Ory's Creole Jazz Band playing *St. James Infirmary* as the very epitome of the post-war Dixieland style.

A lot of hard work had gone into the preparation of these programmes and both lads received warm applause from the audience.

Geoff Howl

Northern Group Meeting, May 21st 1995, Lake Windermere

On Sunday, 21st May, 1995 we had our Steam Boat Portable Picnic as pre-arranged. The weather was favourable for our "Day on Wind-Windermere Lake", when 13 members of the Northern Group spent a very enjoyable afternoon on the steamlaunch *Shamrock* - a 1906 teak-built Windermere Steam Launch - owned and restored by Roger Mallinson, the identical twin brother of our Chairman Miles Mallinson. Members travelled from as far afield as Hereford, Sheffield, Leeds and Barrow, with one friend coming from Köln (in Germany).

The Portable Machines included 2 HMV 102s, a Columbia, an Edison Bell Handiphone, a Mikiphone and a Mikkiphone (Japanese), along with an early Edison Gem. Records included those relating to travelling and sinking on water, the weather (to appease the gods), and other various snippets of entertainment - including *Pass the Biscuits Marandy* - which amused everyone.

A Picnic was enjoyed on board, with "Steam Tea" provided by *Shamrock* - many thanks to Roger Mallinson for a wonderful day.

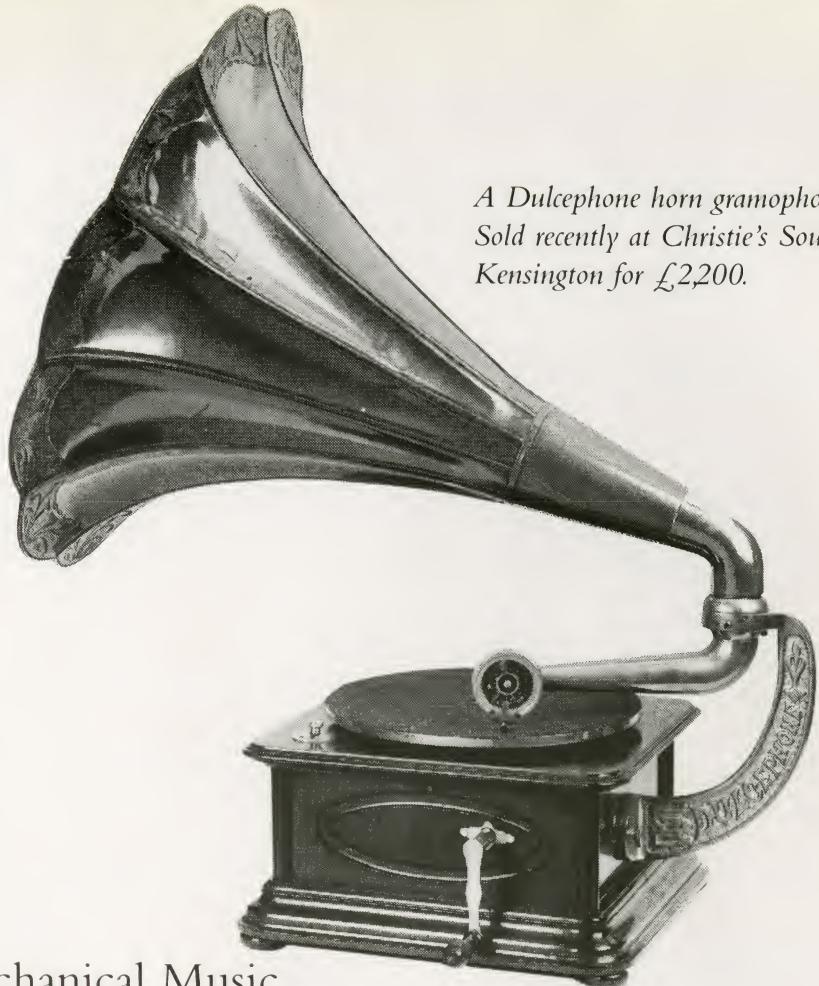
What a wonderful means of transport the Steamboat is, when it is possible to clearly hear a portable machine play some 40 feet away at the other end of the boat - as it whispers its way through the water.

The September Meeting will be held at the Armley Museum at Leeds starting at 2.00pm on Sunday, 17th September, when all members are invited to bring along their favourite and to give a brief account of the reason for their choice. Please ring the Secretary Ann Mallinson, tel: [REDACTED] for further details.

Ann Mallinson



"He played his Ukelele when the ship went down". John Gilkes is praying I think!



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